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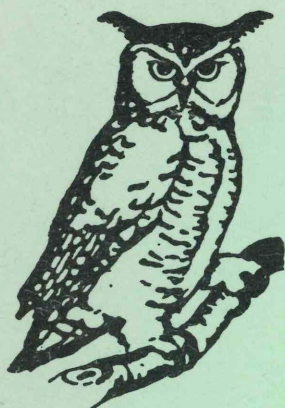
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**Science Center**

Naturalist  
"note book"

**MAY  
1969**





# NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

MAY 1969

VOLUME V

NO. 5

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Front Cover: Jack-in-the-Pulpit  
Photo by Dewire

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THAMES SCIENCE CENTER, INC.  
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# MAY

## The Month Of Bursting Buds

May is the month of bursting buds. Warmer and lengthening days cause the buds to swell and finally break into leaves. Many of these are easy to identify and it is fun to watch them expand and finally open.

The Beech tree has long narrow buds. Inside, the leaves are tightly rolled up and they unravel into the beautiful brilliant greens that are so striking against the tree's light bark.

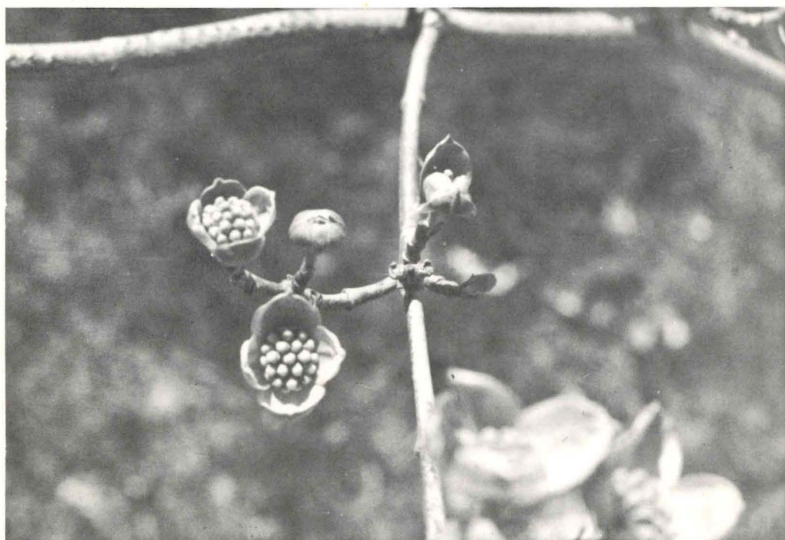


Photo by J. Walker

In the Mountain Laurel and the Flowering Dogwood the buds of the flowers soon to come are more noticeable than the leaf buds. The Dogwood has a large single flower bud

at the edge of each branch. Mountain Laurel has its flower buds in clusters which will grow in size through the month.

Hickory trees have among the largest buds of all trees. They begin swelling in mid-April and by May are about the size of a nickel. They open and send out several stems of five to eleven leaflets each. In contrast the buds of black birch are quite small and open early sending out very small leaves which increase in size as the month progresses.

If you have one of these plants in your yard, watch it each day and see the changes take place as it goes from bud to leaf.



Photo by R. Dewire

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**The Interpretive Museum of 622 Williams Street, New London, Connecticut 06320**  
**The Peace Sanctuary Nature Preserve At 200 River Road, Mystic, Connecticut 06355**



# MAY'S CALENDAR

May is the month of warblers and warm days.

May 2. . . The Full Flower Moon -- the first of two full moons this month.

May 5. . . Common Terns arrive to begin nesting along our shoreline.

May 7. . . The Dog-wood flowers on lawns and in woods.

May 11. . . The brilliant red Scarlet Tanagers arrive.

May 12. . . The beautiful Pink Ladyslipper comes in flower: Look -- but do not pick!!

May 15. . . Swamp Azalea flowers add bright pink spots to the woodland.

May 17. . . This was the "Big Day" of 1968 when the first large numbers of migrant warblers arrived here.

May 18. . . Nighthawks pass overhead in the evening heading further North.

May 21. . . The nesting season is well underway with eggs hatching in robin, bluebird, and phoebe nests.

May 24. . . From now until July 23 twilight periods are the longest.

May 24. . . The Wood Pewee says his name "Pee-Wee" from woodlands.

May 25. . . The Indigo Bunting, one of the last migrants to arrive, sings from wood bordered fields.

May 28. . . Mars rises directly opposite the sun at sunset. It is brilliant and red colored.

May 31. . . The Full Invasion Moon.



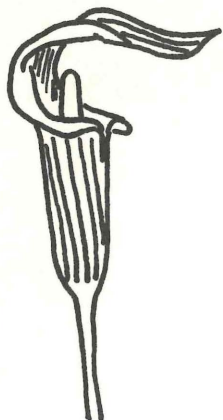
# TALES FROM PEQUOT HILL—

by TRUDY GARDNER.

There is a plant growing at Pequot Hill that is a favorite with all children. It's the Jack-in-the-Pulpit.

The very shape is mysterious and one cannot help but to take a peek under the striped hood to discover what might be hidden there.

When looking inside the pulpit or hood we find "Jack" has but one leg and his flowers are set around it. In August the hood falls away showing brilliant red berries. These berries were used by the Indians to make war paint. The Jack-in-the-Pulpit has another name. At the bottom of the plant there is a bulb or food-store-house called a corm. The corm was used as a food by the Indians which gave the plant the name of Indian Turnip. Before they ate the corm they had to boil it because when it is not cooked it is very hot and peppery.

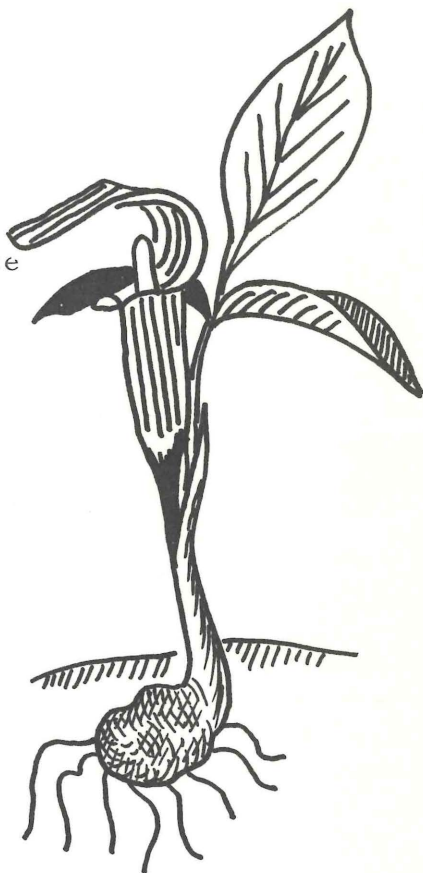


The Indians told a tale about this plant. They claim that there was a missionary who had died and was buried in the woods. Out of his grave came a new and wonderful plant, shaped like a pulpit and right in the middle of it was the missionary preaching. They became very fond of him--why not take a walk in your favorite woods and look for this little preacher. Meanwhile here is a poem about Jack-in-the-Pulpit for you to enjoy. . .

Come, hear what his reverence  
Rises to say  
In his low painted pulpit  
This calm Sabbath day.

Fair is the canopy  
Over him seen,  
Penalled by Nature's hand  
Black, brown, and green.

Green is his surplice,  
Green are his bands;  
In his strange little pulpit  
The little priest stands.



# ROCK HOUNDS

by JERRY THEILER

## GEODES AND NODULES

Geodes are cavities in rocks that have been lined with crystals. Nodules are cavities in rocks that have been completely filled in.

Scientists are not positive how these are formed, but this is the most promising theory. Cavities may be left in a rock from such things as fossil shells or bubbles within lava. As water moves through the rock it dissolves some minerals. Dissolved minerals often color the water, and as the water passes into the cavity it becomes lined with the minerals in the water. As water evaporates minerals are left behind.

When this happens to a cavity that does not become completely filled in, the water in a cavity may have time to allow the minerals to arrange themselves into crystals. In this case a geode is formed. If layer upon layer of minerals fills the cavity completely a banded nodule (see illustration) is formed.

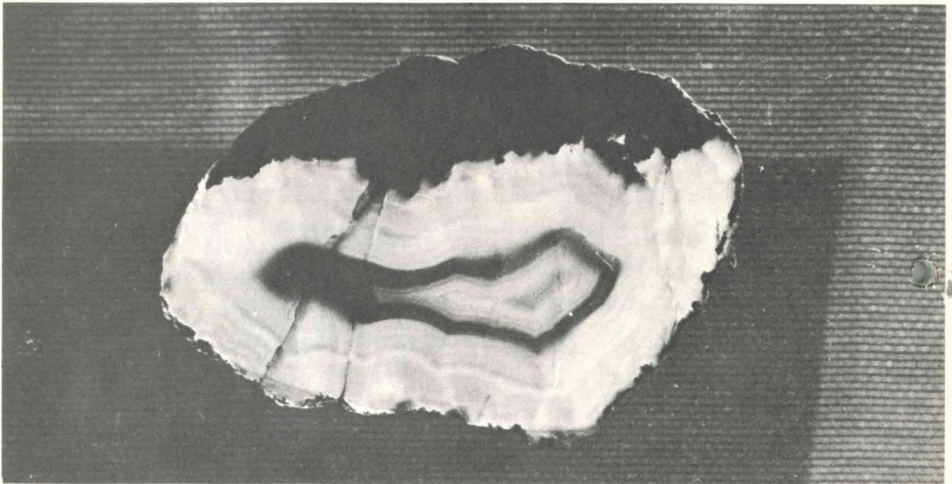


Photo by J. Walker

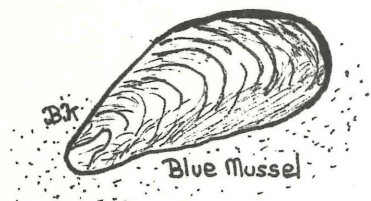


# THE BLUE MUSSEL

## ALONG THE SHORE

by BARBARA KASHANSKI

Warm, sunny days are coming -- it's time for a trip to the beach!

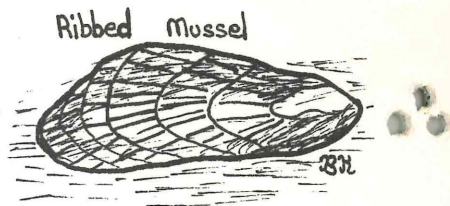


One of the most common shells you will find is that of the Blue Mussel. Large groups or beds of these bivalves can be found in tidal pools, clinging to rocks along the shore, or massed on wooden pier pilings. Mussels

don't move around as much as their cousins the clam and scallop. They like to stay in one place hanging onto a rock or piece of wood by means of strong thread called byssus. The byssus threads are sticky when they are first made, by glands in the mussel's foot, but they become hard and very strong after they have been in the water for a few minutes. If you have ever tried to pull a mussel away from a rock you know how strong these thin little threads are!

The Latin name for the blue mussel is Mytilus edulis which means "edible mussel", and edible they are!! I

would much rather eat blue mussels than any kind of clam or oyster. They have a very sweet delicate flavor and are delicious when steamed like clams and then dipped in butter. In Europe, and especially France, mussels are widely used as a food, and it is the same blue mussel we have along our coasts. It seems a sad thing to have to warn you to be sure that the area you gather mussels from is safe and not polluted. Be sure also that you have the blue mussel and not its close relative the Ribbed Mussel, for this one is not good to eat. Blue mussels have a smooth-looking blue-black shell and the ribbed mussel is brownish with ridges or "ribs" radiating out from the narrow hinged end of the shell.



If you ever become a happy, eager blue mussel eater there are some good recipes for you to try in Euell Gibbons book "Stalking the Blue-eyed Scallop".

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## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK . . . .

We welcome notice of Conservation activities or problems for inclusion in this section of the Naturalist's Notebook. . . . Please let us know of your local activity so that others may be aware of your efforts and lend their support where possible. . . .

**NATURE FESTIVAL:** The Science Center's Nature Festival will be held on May 17th and 18th at the Connecticut Arboretum. Details of the festival were sent out to our members. This is our first attempt at such a program and we hope that it will be successful enough to make it an annual event. It is hoped that all of our members will be able to attend and they are urged to bring their friends as it is open to the public. If you do not have a brochure but would like one please call the Center and we will see that you get one.

**BANDING RETURN:** It is always exciting for a bird bander to catch a bird in one of his traps and find that the bird is wearing a band other than your own. This happened last year on Nov. 25th at the Science Center's banding station when Mr. Dewire caught a fox sparrow that had a strange band on it. The number was written down and sent to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Research Center at Patuxent, Maryland along with the location of the capture and date. Mr. Dewire received a report from them on the bird in April. It was found that the bird had been banded near Milo, Maine which is in the South Central Section of the state near the city of Bangor. It had been banded on Nov. 16th which means it had flown down to the Center's feeder in just 9 days.



**BUILDING FUND:** As you are probably aware of by now we were able to match the ten thousand dollar grant given to us through the generosity of many of our members, interested persons in the community, organizations, and businesses. It shows that the people of southeastern Connecticut are interested in the Center and its work. Once again we thank you all.

**RACCOON BOUNTY:** As this Newsletter went to press, Bill SB 1547, introduced by Senator William B. Stanley was to go before the Senate. It would put a \$5.00 bounty on all raccoons in this State. Favorably reported out of the General Law Committee it stands a good chance of being passed by the Senate. All conservation organizations in the State as well as State Fisheries and Game Director Theodore Bampton strongly oppose this bill. At a time when many states are moving forward by removing bounties on many animals, putting a bounty on the raccoon is taking a giant step backward and it will be very unfortunate if Connecticut sets such an example to other states. Write or call your Senator and fight this bill.

**ENDANGERED SPECIES:** When the Trumpeter Swan was removed from the endangered species list last year, it showed how good management and protection could bring back a species threatened with extinction. Now a new bird has had its name added to the list -- the Peregrine Falcon or Duck Hawk. One of the most spectacular of all our hawks its numbers have dropped off precipitously in the last few years. Infected by DDT and habitat destruction the bird no longer nests in continental United States except for strongholds in Alaska, and nests here are failing too. If this trend continues the Peregrine may be the next bird to disappear from the earth.

# YOUR OWN NATURE JAUNT

by BOB DEWIRE

## TO A WOODLAND

A May sunrise signifies the start of an exciting day in a woodland in Connecticut. The sounds and smells of the woods that reach you as you walk down a path all add to its beauty. The bird migration is at its peak and wildflowers are everywhere. Canada Mayflower or false lily-of-the-valley forms carpets of green in many areas with small clusters of white flowers rising just above the leaves. Pink Ladyslippers flower around laurel bushes and the large Mayapple hides its white flowers under its leaves.

The woods are filled with bird songs. They mold together into a loud chorus of warbles, chirps, and buzzes making it hard to distinguish individual singers. Flashes of yellows and reds in the trees and bushes give one quick glimpses of the myriads of warblers -- some 30 different species -- that move through here in May. Only about 10 will stay to nest while the rest continue further north.

The champions of color in our woods in spring have to be the scarlet tanager and Baltimore oriole. Both remain to nest and they are quite evident as they sing constantly. In addition to the chorus of bird songs, a thumping that quickens to a roll like distant thunder may be heard. This is the drumming of the ruffed grouse who creates the sound by air currents from his flapping wings.

Gray squirrels scold from trees and chipmunks will often allow a very close approach before scampering away uttering a very loud chipping sound.

By evening, frogs will probably be audible from nearby swamps. Chimney swifts and swallows will catch the myriads of insects out in the evening. As darkness comes in the loud and constant calls of the whippoorwill may be heard. At night, careful listening may reveal the sounds of faint chips in the sky overhead. The source of these sounds are from flocks of warblers, flycatchers, vireos, and other songbirds who migrate at night and are heading further north. The following morning an entire new group of birds may be in the woods having come in during the night.

Going into the woods in May is most pleasant and everyone should try to get out and enjoy Nature at her best.



Photo by J. Walker



# CONNECTICUT CREATURES

by MIKE WALKER

On March 27, Bob Dewire and I were walking around the Arboretum Pond planning the course of an upcoming field trip. The sky was overcast and a chill breeze stirred the surface of the water. Earlier that day, on my way to work, I had noticed that the temperature was 46°. We paused at a point on the trail where we could see out across the water and stared in disbelief. There, on a rock near the middle of the pond, a painted turtle was "basking" as though it was enjoying the sun of June.

We shouldn't have been surprised. The hardy painted turtle is an amazing reptile. During winter it has been observed moving about on the bottom of ponds covered with ice, and it frequently makes its first appearance above water well before Spring has officially arrived. It is the only turtle that is found in every province of Canada except harsh Newfoundland. In the United States this sturdy Northerner ranges the "blizzard belt" of upper America from Oregon to Maine.

Painted turtles get their name from the bright patterns of red, yellow, and black that mark their shell and body. In the species found in our area, the upper shell, or carapace, is black. The front edges of the large plates on the carapace are olive and the border of the upper shell is strongly marked with red; the bottom shell, or plastron, is usually unmarked yellow. The head, neck, feet, and tail are streaked with yellow and black.

Painted turtles are thoroughly aquatic animals, seldom leaving the water except to bask or lay eggs. The former habit has earned the reptile the nickname "sun turtle."

In nature, more than a third of the painted turtles' diet consists of various water plants. The rest of its menu includes insects, crayfish, worms, and snails.

Each year many of these handsome turtles are caught by boys and girls eager to keep them as pets. Sadly, a great number of these die because their captors do not know how to care for them. It is beyond the scope of this brief article to provide detailed information on the care of turtles in captivity, but a few points should be made clear.

First, painted turtles need a diet of live animals (earthworms are a good staple) and fresh greens such as aquarium plants or bottom plants in ponds.

Second, they must have water enough to submerge in completely (they swallow underwater) and "land" enough to emerge on completely.

Third, in captivity they need vitamin-mineral supplements in their water. These nutrients are available in slowly dissolving blocks sold at pet stores.

Fourth, do not ever attempt to feed any turtle or other creature the utterly valueless dried "turtle food" that is available on the market.

Finally, unless you are seriously interested in keeping a turtle and willing to look after your little prisoner day after day, it is far better to release him where you found him. He has a spot in the sun waiting for him.

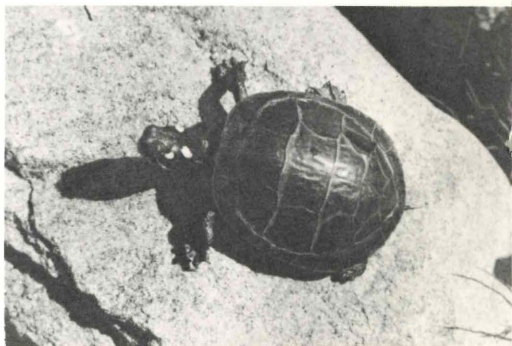


Photo by J. Walker

# FIELD NOTES

MARCH 15 -- APRIL 15

Essex, Saybrook, Lyme and East Lyme: CROCUS were first seen in flower in Lyme on March 16th. The PHOEBE and WOOD DUCK were first reported from this area at the Meadowwoods Natural Area in Essex on March 28th and 29th respectively. Thirty-five RUDDY DUCKS were at South Cove in Saybrook on March 28th. Easter Sunday morning a flock of SNOW GEESE totalling some 500 birds were seen going up the Conn. River. Four OSPREY'S nests are being used on Great Island and egg transfer studies will continue this year. The RED-HEADED WOODPECKER is still at Rocky Neck and BLUE-WINGED TEAL were seen there on March 30th.

Niantic, Waterford, and New London: HORSETAILS were pushing up at the Science Center on April 1st and TRAIL-LING ARBUTUS was in flower on the 13th. MOURNING CLOAK BUTTERFLIES were reported on the 7th and SPRING AZURES on the 14th. WOOD FROGS were very late this year. No reports came in until April 2nd compared to March 19th last year. PAINTED TURTLES were on rocks in the Arboretum on March 27th. A MINK was seen running along the bank of a brook and under a waterfall at Dimmock Road in Waterford. OSPREY arrivals at Black Point were March 23rd and 25th. TREE SWALLOWS were first seen at Gorton's Pond -- a single bird on March 28th and 30+ on the 29th. Other spring arrivals were WOOD DUCK at Magonk Point on March 18th; PHOEBE at Oil Mill Road on the 23rd; GREEN-WINGED TEAL on the 23rd, PIPING PLOVER on April 7th and SNOWY EGRET on the 8th all at Harkness Park; RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET in the Arboretum on April 10th and BARN SWALLOWS at Harkness on the 15th. The first ROBIN to be heard in full song was at the Center on April 2nd. Several RED CROSSBILLS were in the pines near Mitchell's Woods on



March 30th and 1 - 2 RED-NECKED GREBES were at Magonk Point from March 18th through April 6th.

Groton, Mystic, and Stonington: SPRING PEEPERS were a little late this year being heard on March 23rd at Barn Island. RED-BACKED SALAMANDERS and a GARTER SNAKE were found at the Peace Sanctuary on April 7th. A "V" of 110 CANADA GEESE flew North up the Mystic River on March 18th and a spectacular flock of 170 SNOW GEESE came down in the river on April 5th and remained to the 7th. WOODCOCK performed in several areas. The OSPREY arrived at Wilcox Curve on March 23rd. Other arrivals and dates include the PHOEBE at the Peace Sanctuary, a COMMON EGRET at Groton Long Point and GREATER YELLOWLEGS at Mason's Island all on March 29th; TURKEY VULTURE at Lantern Hill on March 20th; a YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER on Long Cove Rd., Gales Ferry on April 8th and an early CHIPPING SPARROW on River Road, Mystic on the 12th. COMMON SNIPE were reported from several areas. A DICKCISSELL was seen on River Road on April 14th. RED-POLLS disappeared from the area on the 13th.

Rhode Island Shoreline: On March 24th at Weekapaug there was a COMMON EGRET, PIGEON HAWK, and LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE. PIPING PLOVERS arrived at Napatree Point on March 30th. A very early DOWITCHER was at Galilee on April 14th, but the top bird there was an adult LITTLE BLUE HERON on March 28th.

Contributors to this column were: Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bates, Grace Bissell, Lawrence Brooks, Mr. & Mrs. Earl Canfield, Vilma Carocari, Mrs. Charles Chapin, Bob & Mary Jean Dewire, Mr. & Mrs. Frank Eastman, John & Trudy Gardner, John J. Gardner, Barbara Gardner, Helen Gilman, Audrey King, Mary Laffargue, Mrs. Earle Murphy, Maynard Peterson, Billy Ryan, Michael Walker, and William Willetts.

# ACTIVITIES FOR MAY

May 17. . . The Science Center's Nature Festival. Those  
& who did not receive a brochure with the  
May 18 details of this exciting weekend may pick  
them up at the Science Center.

May 21. . . 6:30 P.M. Our first Wednesday evening field  
trip. Harkness Park. Meet at the Harkness  
Parking Lot.

May 24. . . 10:00 A. M. A Junior Workshop for members in  
Grades 3, 4, and 5. "Building a Bird House."  
Children participating must bring a  $\frac{1}{2}$  gal.  
milk carton. Registration required. Limit  
10 children.

May 24. . . All Day THE BIG DAY. On this day Mr. Dewire  
will be out from dawn to dusk in an attempt  
to record 100 species of birds or more. Anyone  
interested may join him either for part or all  
of the day. The schedule is below and 15  
minutes should be allowed on either side of  
the suggested time.

6:00 A.M. . . . Peace Sanctuary

7:30 A.M. . . . Arboretum (Main Entrance)

9:00 A.M. . . . Mitchell's Woods (Ocean  
Ave. Entrance.)

10:00 A.M. . . . Harkness Park (Parking Lot)

\*12:45 A.M. . . . Barn Island (Boat Launching)

3:00 P.M. . . . Napatree Point (Watch Hill  
Parking Lot).

6:00 P.M. . . . Peace Sanctuary (Further lo-  
cations will be decided at this  
time.)

\*Lunch should be planned on around this period.

May 25. . . 2:00 P.M. A Wildflower walk to the home of  
Mr. & Mrs. Sidney Hatchell at their home,  
"Hidden Acres." Meet at their home off Route  
184 in Mystic.

May 28. . . 6:30 P.M. An evening trip to Barn Island. Meet  
at the State Boat Landing.



# NATURALIST NOTEBOOK

Published by the

**THAMES SCIENCE CENTER**

622 Williams Street  
New London, Connecticut 06320

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JOHN F. GARDNER--*Executive Director*  
ROBERT C. DEWIRE--*Naturalist*  
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The NATURALIST NOTEBOOK is published monthly. Subscription available through membership only.

The Thames Science Center is a nonprofit organization seeking a quality environment through education.

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John F. Gardner  
*Editor*

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*Look, But  
Don't Touch.  
This Is  
Poison Ivy.*

Photo by R. Dewire